



## Leaves and Landscaping Debris DO NOT Belong in Waterways

Leaves are natural organic materials. A certain amount of leaves and tree debris will naturally fall in our wetlands, streams and rivers ...and our wetlands, streams and rivers incorporate those components into their ecosystem.

This does **NOT** mean that wetlands, streams and rivers would benefit from more leaves! Like most things in life, **too much** is almost always a **bad thing**.

What is it about leaves and landscaping debris that is bad for our waterways?

As these organic materials decompose, the decaying process depletes oxygen dissolved in the water. Dissolved oxygen is needed by aquatic life. A pulse of leaves (or any other organic material) results in drop in dissolved oxygen, which causes fish and shellfish to suffocate and die off.

Additionally, organic materials (including leaves) still contain the nutrients that helped the plants grow...particularly phosphorus and nitrogen. Nutrients are essential to life, but too much can harm more than help. Too many nutrients can cause an overgrowth of vegetation and algae blooms. When these excess plants are growing, the water can turn green and murky. And when these excess plants eventually die, they decay and decompose. Starting the drop in dissolved oxygen again.

Lastly, all of that organic material tends to settle to the bottom of our waterways. The sand and gravel that support important wildlife habitat become suffocated and inaccessible to wildlife.

All of these negative consequences impact all of our waterways...from the smallest stream to Long Island Sound.

**Luckily, fall landscaping debris is one of the easiest types of pollution to control. (see tips next page).**



Leaves and grass make excellent natural (& free!) fertilizer. Because leaves and yard debris contain high quantities of nutrients, they act as a natural fertilizer.

Buy a mulching mower (one without a bag that has extra sharp blades that cuts what you mow into very small pieces and deposits that 'mulch' back onto your lawn).

Or use your existing mower to chop and collect fallen leaves. You can then use the mulch wherever you need it.

### **Mulch It, Don't Blow It!**



Leaves and yard debris, along with many other items from your household, can be composted.

Composting leaves makes a dark, rich, earthy organic matter that can be used like soil. It adds nutrients to garden soil and the larger particle size help enhance and loosen compacted soil. When used as a top dressing or mulch, leaf compost retains moisture and repels weeds.

Check out these compost tips: <http://www.homecompostingmadeeasy.com/compostleavesweeds.html>

### **Compost It, Don't Blow It!**



Don't have anywhere on your property to use or keep leaves and landscaping debris? **Bag it.**

For residents that receive City garbage collection, bags will be picked up curbside (see schedule here: <http://www.norwalkct.org/DocumentCenter/View/9812> ).

Otherwise, leaves and yard waste can be brought to the South Smith Street Yard Waste facility. You just need to be a resident of Norwalk and have a Parks Pass.

### **Bag It, Don't Blow It!**